PHILADELPHIA: B. FRANKLIN & D. HALL, 1757

MILLER (FRANKLIN PRINTING) 680.

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TRANSLATION OF A *German* LETTER,

WROTE BY

CONRAD WEISER, Esq;

Interpreter, on *Indian* Affairs, for the Province of *Pennsylvania*.

Esteemed Friend,

I WRITE this, in Compliance with thy Request, to give thee an Account of what I have observed amongst the *Indians*, in Relation to their Belief and Confidence in a divine Being, from the Observations I have made since my first Acquaintance with them. If, by the Word Religion, People mean an Assent to certain Creeds, or the Observance of a Sett of religious Duties, as ap-

pointed Prayers, Singing, Preaching, Baptiſm, *&c.* or even heatheniſh Worſhip, then it may be ſaid, the *Five Nations*, nor their Neighbours, have no Religion. But if by Religion we mean an Attraction of the Soul to God, or an Union of the Soul with God, from which proceeds a Confidence in, and Hunger after, the Knowledge of him, then theſe People muſt be allowed to have ſome Religion amongſt them, notwithſtanding their ſometime ſavage Deportment: For we find amongſt them ſome Traces of a Confidence in God alone; and even ſometimes (though but ſeldom) a vocal Calling upon him.-----I ſhall give one or two Inſtances of what fell under my own Obſervation.

In the Year 1737, the latter End of *February*, at the Deſire of the Governor of *Virginia*, I ſet out very unexpectedly on my firſt Journey to *Onondago*, being about Five Hundred *Engliſh* Miles, through a Wilderneſs where there was neither Road nor Path, and at ſuch a Time of the Year when Creatures could not be met with for Food, accompanied by a *Dutchman* and three *Indians*. When we had travelled One Hundred and Fifty Miles on our Journey, we came into a narrow Valley, about Half a Mile broad, and Thirty Miles long, the Sides whereof were continued high Mountains, on which the Snow lay about three

three Feet deep: In the Middle of it was a Stream of Water, about three Feet deep, which ran in a ſerpentine Manner, always extending itſelf from one Side of the Valley to the other. In order to avoid repeatedly wading through this Water, we endeavoured to paſs along on the Sides of the Mountains, on which, as I before ſaid, the Snow lay three Feet deep, and froze ſo hard on the Surface, that we could walk upon it. We were obliged to make Holes in the Snow with our Hatchets, that our Feet might not ſlip down the Mountain. While we were thus creeping on, it happened that the old *Indian*'s Foot ſlipt, and the Root of the Tree by which he held breaking, he ſlid down the Mountain as from the Roof of a Houſe; but happily the String which faſtened his Pack, hitching to the Stump of a ſmall Tree, ſtopped his further Deſcent. The two *Indians*, Fellow Travellers, could not go to his Aid, but our *Dutch* Fellow Traveller went to his Aſſiſtance, and that not without viſible Danger of his Life. I alſo could not put a Foot forward till I was helped. After which we concluded to embrace the firſt Opportunity to deſcend into the Valley again, which was not till after we had laboured hard for Half an Hour with Hands and Feet. We had obſerved a Tree that lay oppoſite from where the *Indian* had fell, and when we were deſcended again into the Valley, we returned

back about One Hundred Paces, where we discovered, that if the *Indian* had slipped four or five Paces further, he would have fell over a Rock One Hundred Feet perpendicular, upon craggy Stones below. The *Indian* was astonished, and turned quite pale; then, with outstretched Arms, and great Earnestness, spoke these Words; "I thank thee, great Lord "and Governor of this World, in that thou "hast had Mercy on me, and hath been willing "that I should live longer." Which Words I immediately set down in my Journal. This happened the Twenty-fifth of *March*, 1737.

The Ninth of *April* following, whilst we were yet on our Journey, I found myself extremely weak, through the Fatigue of so long a Journey, with the Cold and Hunger I had suffered; and there having fallen a fresh Snow, of about twenty Inches deep, we being yet three Days Journey from *Onondago*, in a frightful Wilderness, my Spirit failed, Trembling seized my Body, and I therefore thought Nature could no longer exist; on which I stepped aside, and sat me down under a Tree, expecting there to die. My Companions soon missed me. The *Indians* came back, and found me sitting there. I told them in a Word I would go no farther; I would die there. They remained silent a while; at last the old *Indian* said, "My dear Companion, thou hast hither-

"to

" to encouraged us; wilt thou now quite give " up? Remember that evil Days are better " than good; for when we ſuffer much, we do " not ſin; and Sin will be drove out of us by " Sufferings: But good Days cauſe Men to " ſin, and God cannot extend his Mercy to " them; but, contrariwiſe, when it goes evil " with us, God has Compaſſion upon us."---- Theſe Words made me aſhamed: I roſe up, and travelled on as well as I could.

The Year following, I went another Journey to *Onondago*, in Company with *Joſeph Spangenbergh*, and two others. It happened that an *Indian* met us, who had neither Shoes, Stockings, Shirt, Gun, Knife, nor Hatchet; in a Word, he had nothing but an old torn Blanket, and ſome Rags. Upon enquiring where he was going, he anſwered, to *Onondago*. I knew him, and aſked, how he could undertake to go a Journey of Three Hundred Miles ſo naked and unprovided, having no Proviſions, nor any Arms to kill Creatures for his Suſtenance? He anſwered, he had been amongſt Enemies, and was obliged to ſave himſelf by Flight, and ſo had loſt all. This was in Part Truth, though he had diſpoſed of ſome of his Things amongſt the *Iriſh* for ſtrong Liquors. Upon further Converſation, he told me very chearfully, that God fed every Thing which had Life, even the Rattle-ſnake itſelf,

itſelf, though it was a bad Creature; and that God would alſo provide in ſuch a Manner, that he ſhould arrive at *Onondago*; he knew for certain that he muſt go there; that it was viſible God was with the *Indians* in the Wilderneſs, becauſe they always caſt their Care upon him; but that, contrary to this, the *Europeans* always carried Bread with them. He was an *Onondager*; his Name was *Anontagketa*. The next Day we travelled in Company, and the Day following I provided him with a Hatchet, Knife, Flint, Tinder, Shoes and Stockings, and ſent him before me, to give Notice to the Council at *Onondago* that I was coming, which he truly performed, having got there three Days before us.

Two Years ago, I was ſent by the Governor of *Pennſylvania* to *Shamokin*, on Account of the the unhappy Murder of *John Armſtrong*, the *Indian* Trader. After I had performed my Errand, there was a Feaſt prepared, to which the Meſſengers ſent by the Governor were invited. There were about One Hundred Perſons preſent, to whom, after we had in great Silence devoured a fat Bear, the oldeſt of the Chiefs made a Speech; in which he ſaid, that, by a great Misfortune, three of their Brethren, the white Men, had been killed by an *Indian*: That nevertheleſs, the Sun was not ſet (meaning that there was no War) it had only been ſome-

ſomewhat darkened by a ſmall Cloud, which was now done away. He that had done the Evil was like to be puniſhed, and the Land to remain in Peace; therefore exhorted his People to Thankfulneſs to God, and thereupon began to ſing with an awful Solemnity, but without expreſſing any Words; the others accompanied him with their Voices. After they had done, the ſame *Indian*, with great Earneſtneſs, ſpoke theſe Words; "THANKS, "THANKS BE TO THEE, THOU GREAT "LORD OF THE WORLD, IN THAT THOU "HAST AGAIN CAUSED THE SUN TO "SHINE, AND HAST DISPERSED THE "DARK CLOUD: THE INDIANS ARE THINE.

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